

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05 MCT-01
/080 W

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P R 142141Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4304
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH
AMCONSUL CALI POUCH
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, PINS, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. THE TWO FACTIONS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY ARE EXPECTED TO NOMINATE BELISARIO BETANCUR AS THEIR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN SEPARATE CONVENTIONS THIS MONTH. THE GOVERNMENT DECREED AN INCREASE IN THE MINIMUM WAGE, BUT LABOR OFFICIALS ARE DISSATISFIED AND PLAN A SERIES OF RALLIES FOR OCTOBER 28. INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS HAVE CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE SEPTEMBER 14 GENERAL STRIKE. ANAPO (ROJAS FACTION) HAS DECIDED TO POSTPONE OFFERING ITS SUPPORT TO A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE UNTIL EARLY NEXT YEAR. THERE WAS FURTHER SABOTAGE IN SUPPORT OF THE ECOPETROL STRIKE. END SUMMARY.

2. RIVAL CONSERVATIVE CONVENTIONS WILL PROBABLY AGREE ON BETANCUR CANDIDACY. THE CONVENTION OF THE PRO-GOVERNMENT ALVARO
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GOMEZ FACTION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY ON OCTOBER 14 IS EXPECTED TO PROCLAIM BELISARIO BETANCUR AS ITS 1978 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. BETANCUR WILL PROBABLY ALSO BE NOMINATED BY THE RIVAL AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT PASTRANA-OSPINA CONSERVATIVE WING'S CONVENTION, TO BE HELD ON OCTOBER 22. BETANCUR HAS BEEN TRYING TO BRING THE TWO HOSTILE FACTIONS CLOSER TOGETHER BY IMPLYING THAT HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE CANDIDACY MIGHT BE CONDITIONAL UPON THE UNIFICATION OF THE

TWO GROUPS. HE HAS INDICATED PRIVATELY TO EMBASSY OFFICERS, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAS LITTLE HOPE OF ACCOMPLISHING THIS AND THAT HE IS PREPARED TO RUN WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE DIVIDED PARTY. EX-PRESIDENT PASTRANA, IN REPLY TO BETANCUR'S LATEST OVERTURE, STATED THAT INTRA-PARTY DIFFERENCES WERE PROFOUND AND CALLED ON BETANCUR TO TAKE AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT STANCE WHICH BETANCUR HAS THUS FAR REFRAINED FROM DOING. ALTHOUGH IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR BETANCUR TO ADAPT HIS CANDIDACY TO THE OPPOSING POSITIONS OF BOTH FACTIONS HIS TASK SHOULD BE EASED BY THE FACT THAT HE SEEMS THE ONLY CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE WITH BROAD APPEAL WHO IS ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH GROUPS.

3. GOVERNMENT DECREES MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE. FOLLOWING A GOVERNMENT DECREED MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE ON OCTOBER 12, THE FOUR LABOR CONFEDERATIONS WALKED OUT OF SALARY COUNCIL NEGOTIATIONS. LABOR WAS DISSATISFIED BECAUSE THE DECREE DID NOT INCLUDE A GENERAL WAGE INCREASE AND BECAUSE THEY CLAIM THE MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE IS INSUFFICIENT. THE DECREE PROVIDES FOR AN IMMEDIATE 20 PERCENT INCREASE WITH AN ADDITIONAL 18.7 PERCENT INCREASE SCHEDULED FOR MAY 1978. THE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS ANNOUNCED A SERIES OF NATIONWIDE RALLIES FOR OCTOBER 28, THE MAIN THEMES OF WHICH WILL BE WAGE HIKES AND COST OF LIVING STABILIZATION. UNION OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED TO EMBASSY THAT THEY DO NOT DESIRE AND HAVE NO PLANS FOR ANOTHER GENERAL STRIKE.

4. ICFTU-ORIT OFFICIALS FAULT GOC. REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU) AND THE INTER-AMERICAN REGIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION (ORIT), IN COLOMBIA TO COMPILE INFORMATION ON THE LOCAL LABOR SITUATION, HARSHLY CRITICISED THE GOC FOR THE ALLEGEDLY EXTERME MEASURES IT TOOK DURING LAST SEPTEMBER 14TH'S GENERAL STRIKE (SEE BOGOTA 9519). THE TWO PROMISED TO FOCUS INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION ON COLOMBIA'S LABOR PROBLEMS AND TO FURTHER INVESTIGATE WORKERS'S CHARGES AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. THE GOC HAS NOT YET RESPONDED OFFICIALLY TO THE CRITICISM.

5. ANAPO CONVENTION FAILS TO NOMINATE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. THE ROJAS FACTION OF THE BADLY SPLINTERED NATIONAL POPULAR ALLIANCE (ANAPO) DECIDED TO SUPPORT AN "EVENTUAL" SUPRA-PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, IN ITS FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION SINCE THE 1975 DEATH OF ITS FOUNDER, GENERAL ROJAS PINILLA. THE LATE DICTATOR'S DAUGHTER AND PRESENT PARTY HEAD, MARIA EUGENIE, PROPOSED ACCEPTANCE OF EITHER THE CONSERVATIVE, BELISARIO BETANCUR, OR THE INDEPENDENT, EX-GENERAL ALVARO VALENCIA, AS NATIONAL CANDIDATES. THE DELEGATES, INSTEAD, AUTHORIZED MARIA EUGENIA AND ANAPO SENATOR JOSE GIRALDO TO GIVE THE PARTY'S SUPPORT TO A SUPRA-PARTY CANDIDATE WHO MIGHT EMERGE MORE CLEARLY AFTER THE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS, PROBABLY TO BE HELD IN FEBRUARY. THE

CONVENTION ALSO CONFIRMS MARIA EUGENIE IN HER POSITION AS THE ALLIANCE'S NATIONAL DIRECTOR. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH BETANCUR FREQUENTLY HAS CALLED FOR A NATIONAL CANDIDATE, HE IS EXPECTED TO ACCEPT THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S NOMINATION (SEE ABOVE), LEAVING VALENCIA WITH A GOOD CHANCE OF SECURING ANAPO BACKING AS THE ONLY MAJOR NON-PARTY CONTENDER.

6. PUBLIC ORDER. THE DYNAMITING OF THE BUCARAMANGA-MEDELLIN OIL PIPELINE WAS THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF ACTS OF SABOTAGE IN SUPPORT OF THE STRIKE AGAINST THE COLOMBIAN PETROLEUM ENTERPRISE (ECOPETEROL). COMPANY OFFICIALS, WHO CLAIM THAT ONLY A THIRD OF THE WORKERS ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE STRIKE, ESTIMATED THE TOTAL DAMAGE FROM SABOTAGE OF PIPELINES AND OTHER ECOPETROL FACILITIES AT OVER ONE HUNDRED MILLION PESOS. THE CUBAN-LINE NATIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LIBERATION ARMY (ELN) CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE "EXECUTION" OF TWO OFFICIALS OF THE COMPANY WHICH OPERATES THE AMAGA COAL MINE; THE ELN ANNOUNCED THE KILLINGS WERE IN REPRISAL FOR THE DEATHS OF A LARGE NUMBER OF MINERS AT AMAGA IN A DISASTER LAST AUGUST. THE ELN ATTEMPTED TO COMMEMORATE THE DEATH OF CHE GUEVARRA BY ASSAULTING A SMALL VILLAGE IN NORTHERN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT, BUT THEY WERE DRIVEN OFF BY POLICE AGENTS POSTED IN THE TOWN. DREXLER

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Message Attributes

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